

NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

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Tucson City Court Offers Grant-Funded Mentorships for Courts Handling Domestic Violence Cases

PHOENIX – A grant from the Department of Justice’s Office of Violence Against Women is allowing Tucson City Court to offer training and mentoring for courts interested in adopting a successful domestic violence specialty court model or improving the way they handle domestic violence cases. The court is working with the Center for Court Innovation to implement the mentoring program.

In 2013, Judge Wendy Million launched a specialty court within Tucson City Court to handle domestic violence cases. This court includes dedicated court staff, attorneys, victim advocates and probation officers who are available to speak and train other court professionals that handle these types of cases. The trainings can be on site in Tucson or Judge Million will arrange a specific date to travel to courts elsewhere in Arizona or other states.

“This mentor court grant gives us an opportunity to invite visiting judges, court staff, or advocates to come observe our program in action,” Judge Million said. “We stand ready to help mentor any court that is interested in how we are meeting the needs of those affected by domestic violence. We also stand ready to help with forms or procedures that may be useful in supporting or replicating programs like ours.”

Tucson City Court has a dedicated Domestic Violence Court Coordinator whose position is funded through a separate grant. This person coordinates communication and recordkeeping between the judge, county adult probation officers, treatment providers and supporting partner

organizations. Two independent victim advocates assist with safety planning, education, and referrals to community-based services.

“Last year, our domestic violence court took in 1,144 new cases and completed 2,126 probation reviews. Since 2015, the Court has helped more than 2,166 victims access services. Our program is helping to reduce re-offenses by holding people accountable and giving victims the resources they need to stay safe,” Judge Million said. “We are grateful for this grant from the Office of Violence Against Women so we can share our experience with a wider audience and help reduce domestic violence in our communities.”

Domestic Violence Court is not a separate building, rather it is a program that bundles all serious domestic violence cases on one judge’s calendar. Instead of spreading these cases among several judges, Judge Million hears all serious intimate partner domestic violence cases and works with Tucson’s Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse to provide services to victims. In addition, the court works with Adult Probation and domestic violence treatment providers to hold perpetrators accountable.

The Tucson City Court also has a special outreach program for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, which frequently experiences a higher rate of domestic violence according to national studies. For courts interested in better serving the needs of people with hearing loss, the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf is available to participate in the mentoring programs.

Judges, court administrators, stakeholders, or victim services providers that are interested in participating in the mentorship program should email Tucson City Court’s Domestic Violence Court Coordinator Lisa Akers at lisa.akers@tucsonaz.gov.

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